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ABSTRACT

This story was told to the author by her grandmother, a Yurok born at Pecwan in 1898. Long ago, at a council meeting, the animals decided to ask the Great Creator for tails. He agreed and promised to give each animal a tail the next morning. The first animal to get up would have first choice. Coyote built a big fire and tried hard to stay awake all night, but, at last, he fell asleep. In the very early morning, the animals awoke, and each picked a tail; Gray Squirrel, Beaver, Deer, Grizzly Bear, Black Bear, Raccoon, Fox, Skunk, and Rabbit. Then, Coyote awoke with a start. There was one beautiful tail left. But Coyote was so angry about sleeping late that he dragged his tail through the fire. And that is why Coyote has a scraggly tail. The book contains many large illustrations and a simultaneous Yurok translation, written in the Unifon alphabet. (SV)

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A Yurok Story

How The Animals Got Their Tails

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May 1988

Dedication

This story was told to me by my Grandmother, Lena Reed McCovey, a Yurok born at Pecwan in 1898. This book is dedicated to her, and to Jessie Exline who teaches Yurok language.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Written by:	Maria Tripp, Yurok
Illustrated by:	Lynn R. Shaw, Yurok/Karuk/Hupa
Unifon translation by:	Jessie Exline, Yurok

HOW THE ANIMALS GOT THEIR TAILS

Once a long, long time ago the animals got together for a council meeting.
KO-ƆIH HUH TΔ-NEHM-MOH NOH-HI-KOHN KƆ HO-RE-MEC
once gathering long ago the animals

ƆOH NƆ-MEH KIH WU TE-GE-REW MEH COH-NtK.
very big talk for something going on.

The Great Creator has given us everything we need.
KƆ WO-NGI-EK-tKC-ON KIƆ NΔ-ƆEHL-MOH KƆ' ƆI-KOHL-COK.

We have plenty of food.
NE-KΛ OKW TΔ-NOH NU NE-PƆ.

We have fresh streams to drink from.
NEKΛ OKW CKƆ-YEHN HƎR-ƎR-KƎRH RΛΛK KIH NE RE-KWO MEH.

We have the sun to warm us.
NE-KΛ OKW KƆ KE-ƆGN HE-GOH KIH MEH HƆ-MOH-NEP.

We have twinkling stars at night.
NE-KΛ OKW CERI-KƎRH HO-GEƆ NΛC-ƆE-WEN.

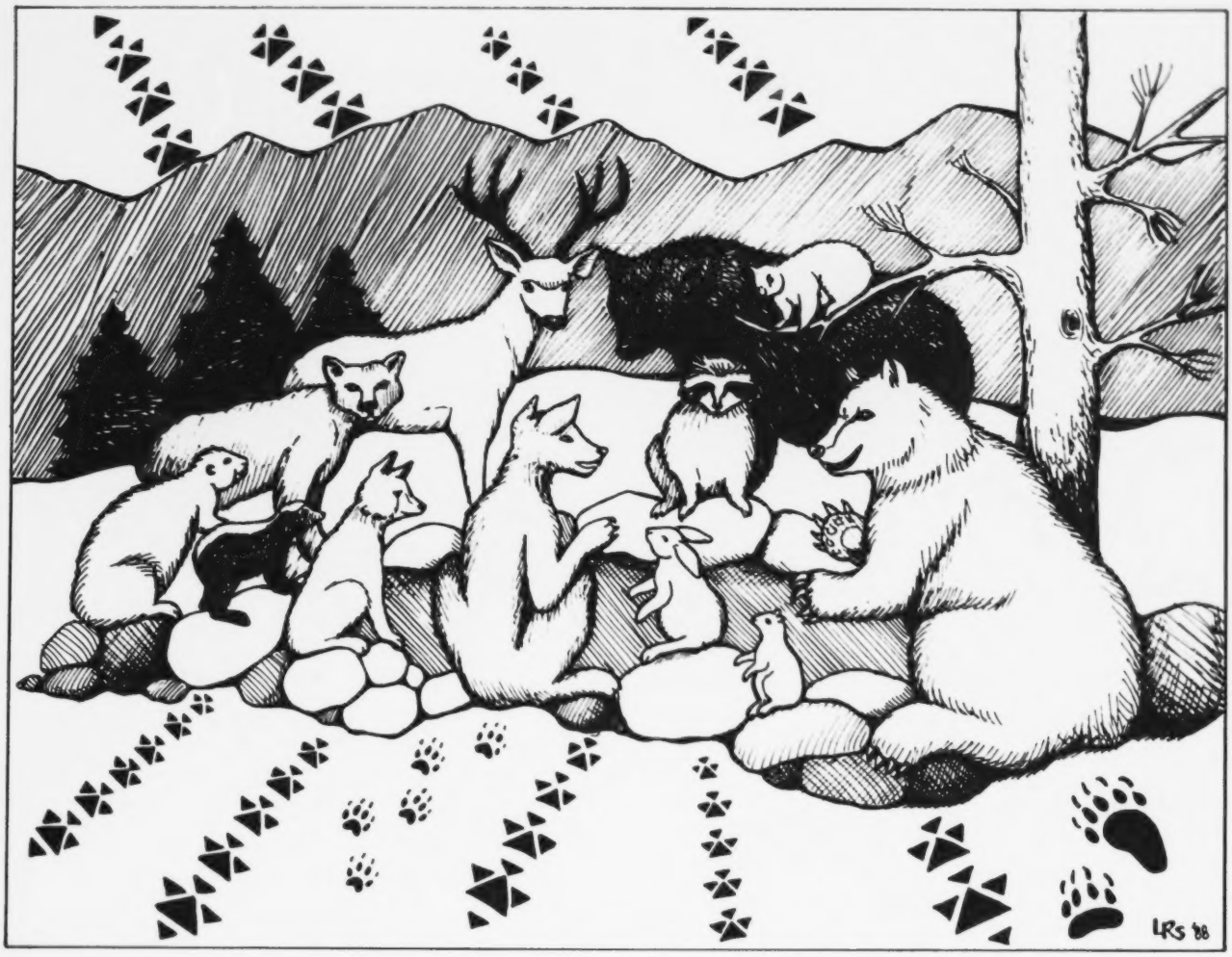
And don't forget we have the moon.
E-CIH KO-WE-ƆOHM HΛP-EH KƆ NΛC-ƆE-WEN HE-GOH.

We also have our friends the birds to sing to us.
NE-KΛ KEM OKW-CEM-MOH KƆ NE RΛ-ƆIN KƆ ƆƆ-ƆIS KƆ RƆ-RU-WOH MEH NE-KΛ.

Then what do we want for?
KOC TƆH KIH CKΔ-WOK CE-MOH?

Finally after much discussion the animals decided what they wanted.
NOH KƆ WEI-KOH WU TΛ-KOH HO-RE-MEC HEC-EH KƆ COK CKΔ-WOK CIH-MEH.

We will ask the Great Creator for tails.
NE-KΛ KIƆ ƆPΔ-PGI-OH-MOH KƆ WO-NGI-EKC MEH WƎR-HƎRI.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And so it was done. The Creator promised there shall be a tail for every animal. Go to sleep early and the first one up shall get to pick the tail they want. Each animal will have a chance.

KƱ WON-GI-EKC-ON HEHM KIH ƆOH OKW KE W3R-H3RI.
The one up above said "You will have tails.

ƆOH KGI-POH ƆKΔ-YEHM. KƱ PGI HΔ-WEH-EHM WO-OT
Do early sleep. The first to awaken will

KIH KƱ W3R-H3RI KƱ KWE-LΛC CKΔ-WOK.
have his tail that you want.

All the animals thought that was a good idea and very fair.
KƱ HO-RE-MEC ƆOH HEC-EH PYƆ-COHN.

Coyote said, "I think I will stay up all night then I will get to pick the best tail."
"CE-GΛP HEHM, "NEK HEC-EH MUC KIH ƆKΛ-YEH NŧK-KŧK-WOK KIH NOH ƆYK-WE-NEK WI-IT KIH SOH HOK KƱ W3R-H3RI KƱ NEK CKΔ-WOK."

Beaver said, "Not me! I'm going to sleep so I can get up early because I know what kind of tail I want."
"TE-CŧR HEHM, "MUC NEK! KIH KGI-PO ƆKΔ-YEK E-CIH KIH KGI-PO HΔ-WEH-EK MIH KOM-ƆƱ-MEK KƱ COHN W3R-H3RI NEK CKΔ-WOK."

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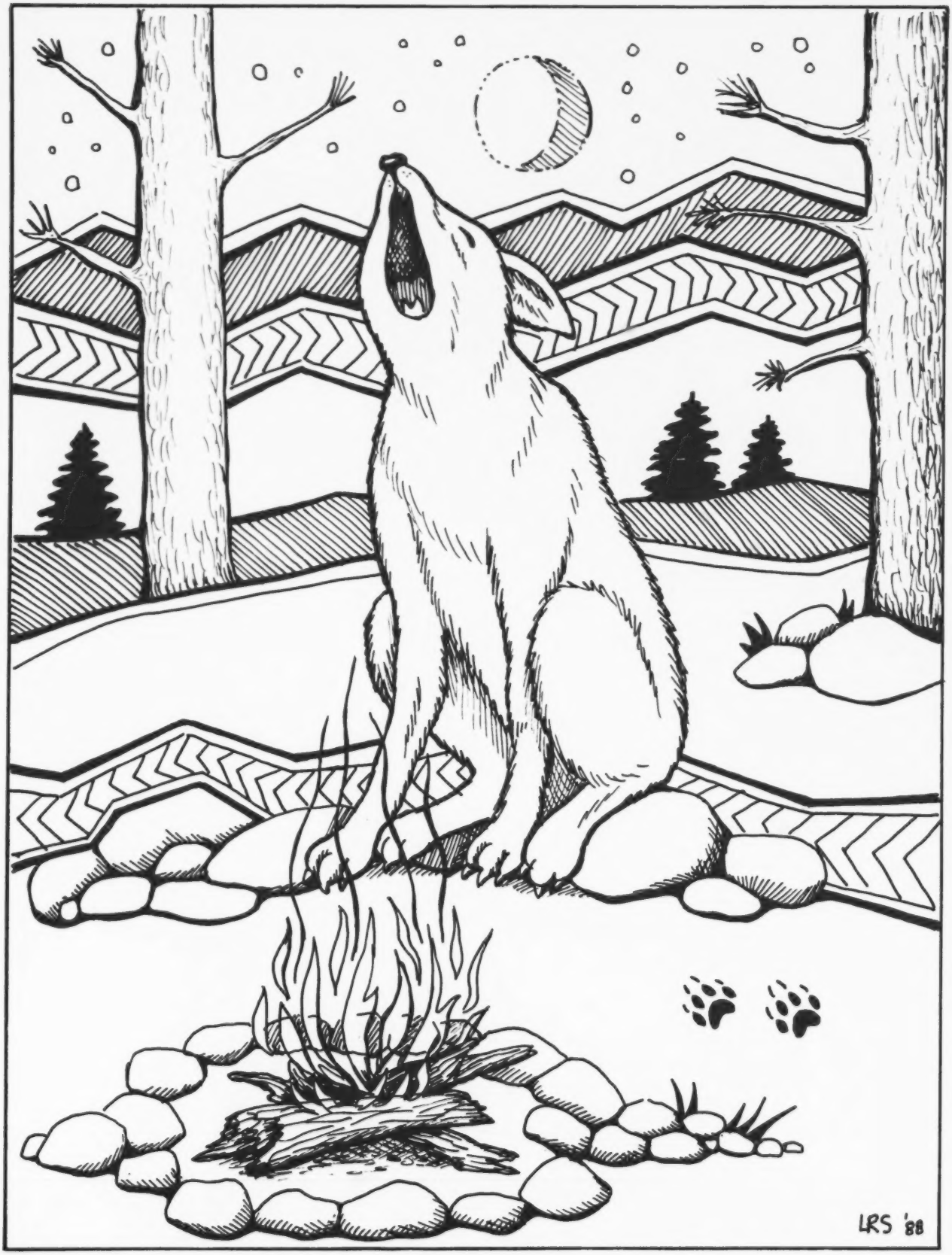
Most of the animals went to sleep early so they could get up early and pick a tail but not Coyote. Coyote built a big fire and talked to raccoon and rabbit.
C+-KIH TOHM MEH KO HO-RE-MEC KGI-PO JKΔ-YEH-WON MUC KWEH CE-GAP. KWE-LAC HO-OP PΔ-LIN MEJ E-CIH TE-GE-REW MEH TWΔ-GA E-CIH H3RK-W3R.

Do you want to stay up all night raccoon?
KEHL HAC KEM KIH WOK-JIH NOH JYK-WEN-EHM TWΔ-GAH?

No, I am a night animal but even I can't stay up all night.
PAAH NEK KWEH. NAC-JE-WEN HO-RE-MEC TUH MUC KIH NO-TEN-EK KIH NE WOK-JIH-EK.

Rabbit said, "Me either and I need my beauty sleep."
H3RK-W3R HEHM, "NEK KEM MIH CKΔ-WOK NE JKΔ-YEK MIH KIH MEH NA-RE-WOK."

Meanwhile Coyote puts more wood on his fire and sings Indian songs to keep himself awake. But soon he starts to nod off.
KO CE-GAP NU-MIH PEHL COH HO-OP E-CIH RO-RQW MEH WU N3R-M3RI. MUC CPAK NOH-OH NΔ-WIH KIT-U-JKEI.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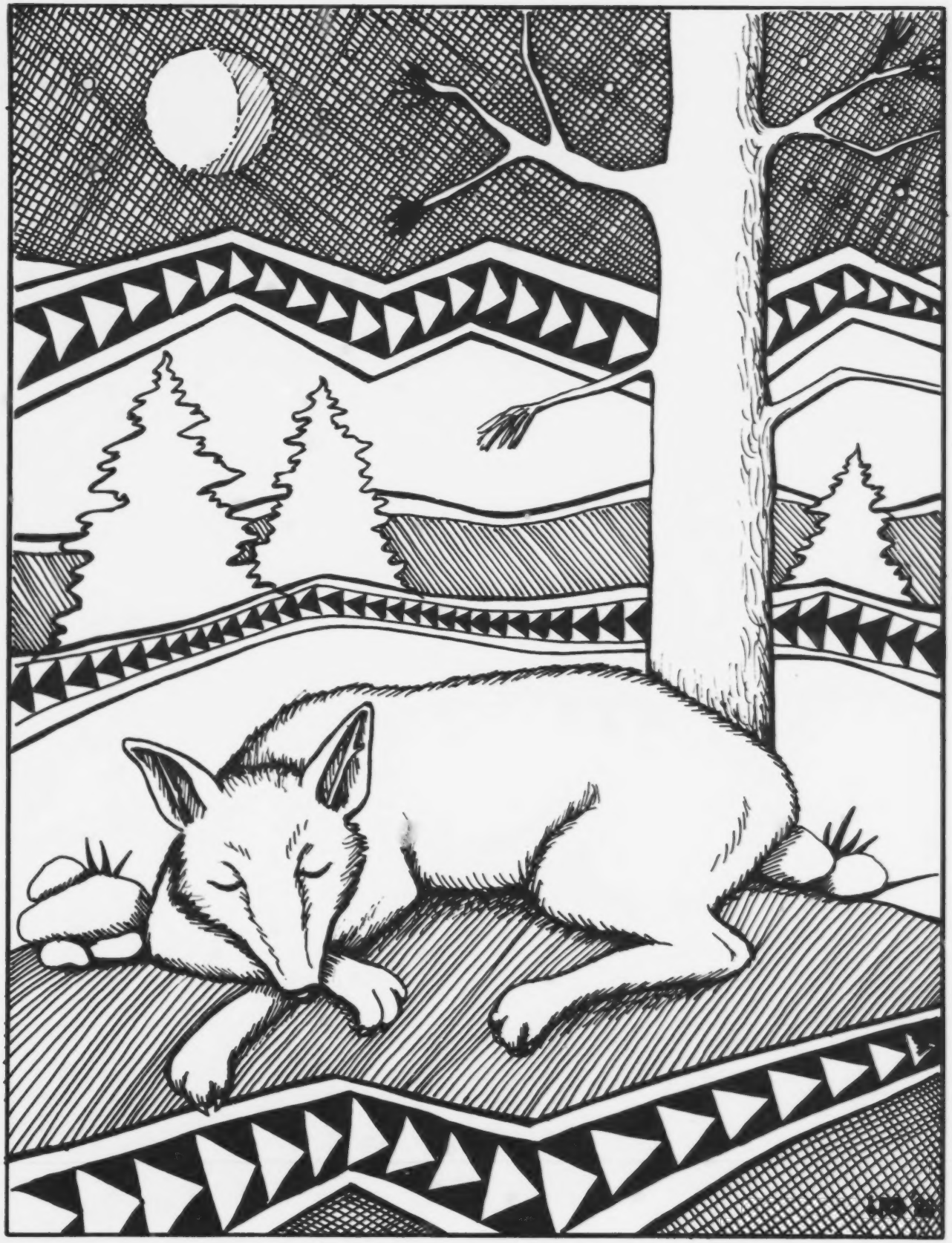
"I will put sticks behind my ears. If I start to fall asleep the sharp points will wake me up."
HEC-KIH NΔ-KEK KQ-WIS HI-NOH NE CPΔ-GΛHR WI-IT KIH
HΔ-WEH-EK MU-ƆOH KƱ KQ-WIS KIH PƎRK-COM NEK. KƱ CE-GΛP
NƱ-MIH ƆKEI.

But it doesn't work and Coyote falls asleep. Very early morning the animals woke up one by one and quietly began to pick their tails.
KƱ WΛN HO-RE-MEC KGI-POH HΔ-WEH-EH E-CIH CKE-WIƆ-EH NU
WU HUH KƱ WƎR-HƎRI.



Gray Squirrel said, "I want a long, fluffy tail so that I can run quickly and keep my balance."
PLI-WEC HEHM, "NEK ƆKΔ-WOK KNΔ-WO-LEP CEW-PIHN W∃R-H∃RI KIH SOH HE-ME Ɔ-ƆOK NE RO-OP-EK PΛΛC U-LΔ-KO-LEK."

Beaver said, "I shall pick this flat wide tail so I can slap the water when danger is near."
TEC-CtR HEHM, "NEK KIH HOK PLGH-CKE-WIP W∃R-H∃RI KIH SOH TOP-COK KU PΛ-ΛH MU-ƆOH KIH KIM-COH NΛC-KWI."

Deer said, "I choose this tiny tail so I can still run swift."
POOK HEHM, "NEK TUH CKΔ-WOK KU ƆΔ-KE-NIH W∃R-H∃RI MIH KIH HI-ME-ƆOK NE-RO-OP-EK."

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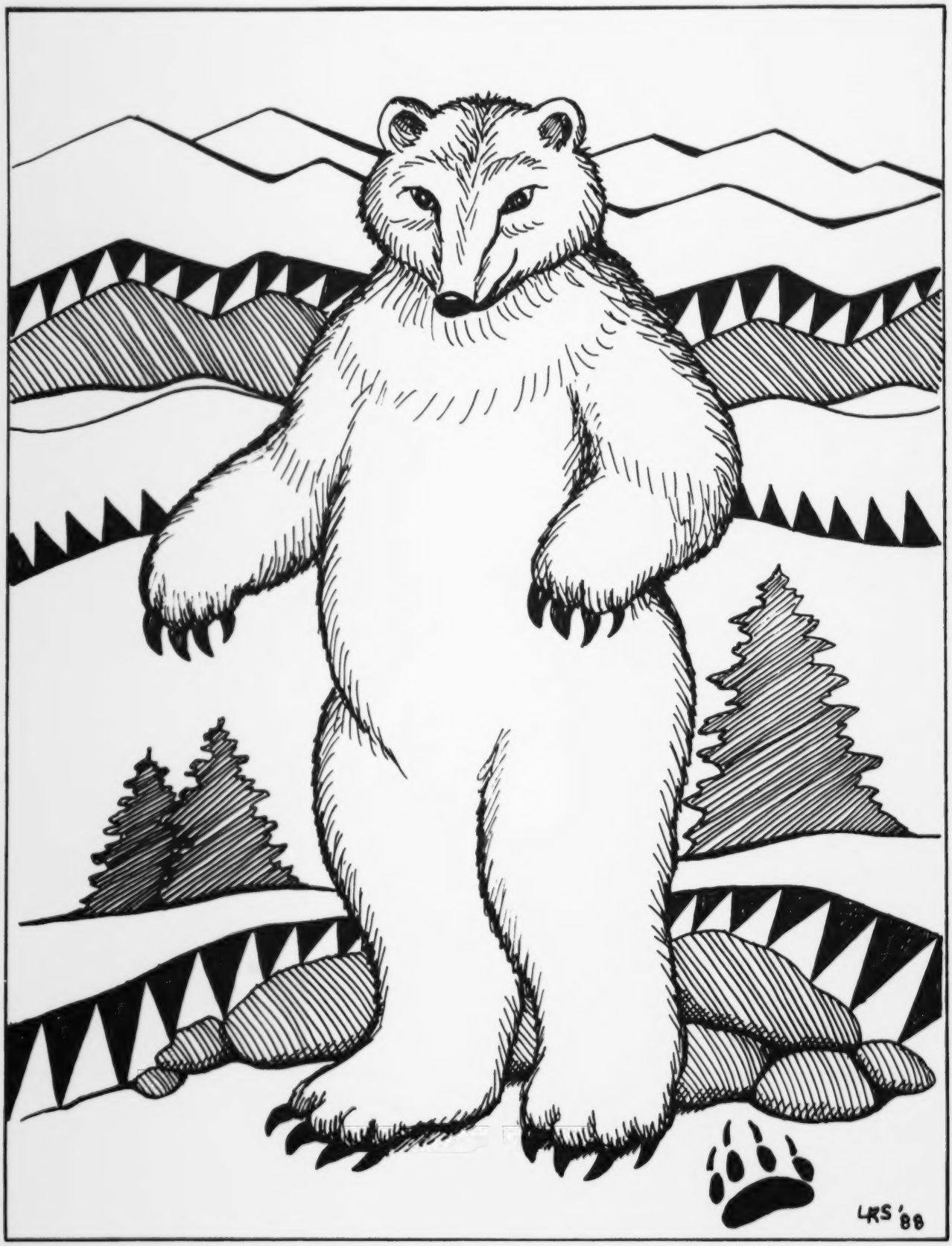
Grizzly Bear said, "I will choose a small tail for I'm already the greatest animal in the forest."
NŦK-WIↃ HEHM, "NEK CKΔ-WOK ↃΔ-KE-NI WƎR-ƎRI MIH KIↃ KŪ NŪ-MIH PGI-CO-NEK WO-ŦK KO TE-PO-NOƎ."

Black Bear said, "Me too! Because I'm the next greatest."
ↃƎR-ƎRI HEHM, "NEK KEMI NEK CPI HI-NOH-CON-EK."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Raccoon said, "This tail with black rings on it is for me. It matches my face."
TWΔ-GΛ HEHM, "WΛHI WƎR-HƎRI MEH LO-O-GΔI CKΛΛKW WI-IT MEH NEK MIH KO-LO NE TO-LOH."

LRS '88

Fox said, "I want this sleek tail so I will be handsome."
W∃R-G∃RC HEHM, "NEK TOH CKΔ-WOK KO ME-CIK W∃R-H∃RI KIH SOH CKO-CO-NGI-WGI+K."

LRS '88

Skunk said, "I want that tail with a stripe to match my coat."
HΔ-YU-MUC HEHM, "NEK TOH CKΔ-WOK W3R-H3RI MEH MON-JΔI LΔI KO COHN NE JWO-NΛH."

Rabbit said, "I pick this cute round fluffy tail."
H3RK-W3R HEHM, "CKΔ-WOK KO JΔ-KE-NI NΛ-REW CEW-PIHN MO-O-KEHL W3R-H3RI."

LRS '88

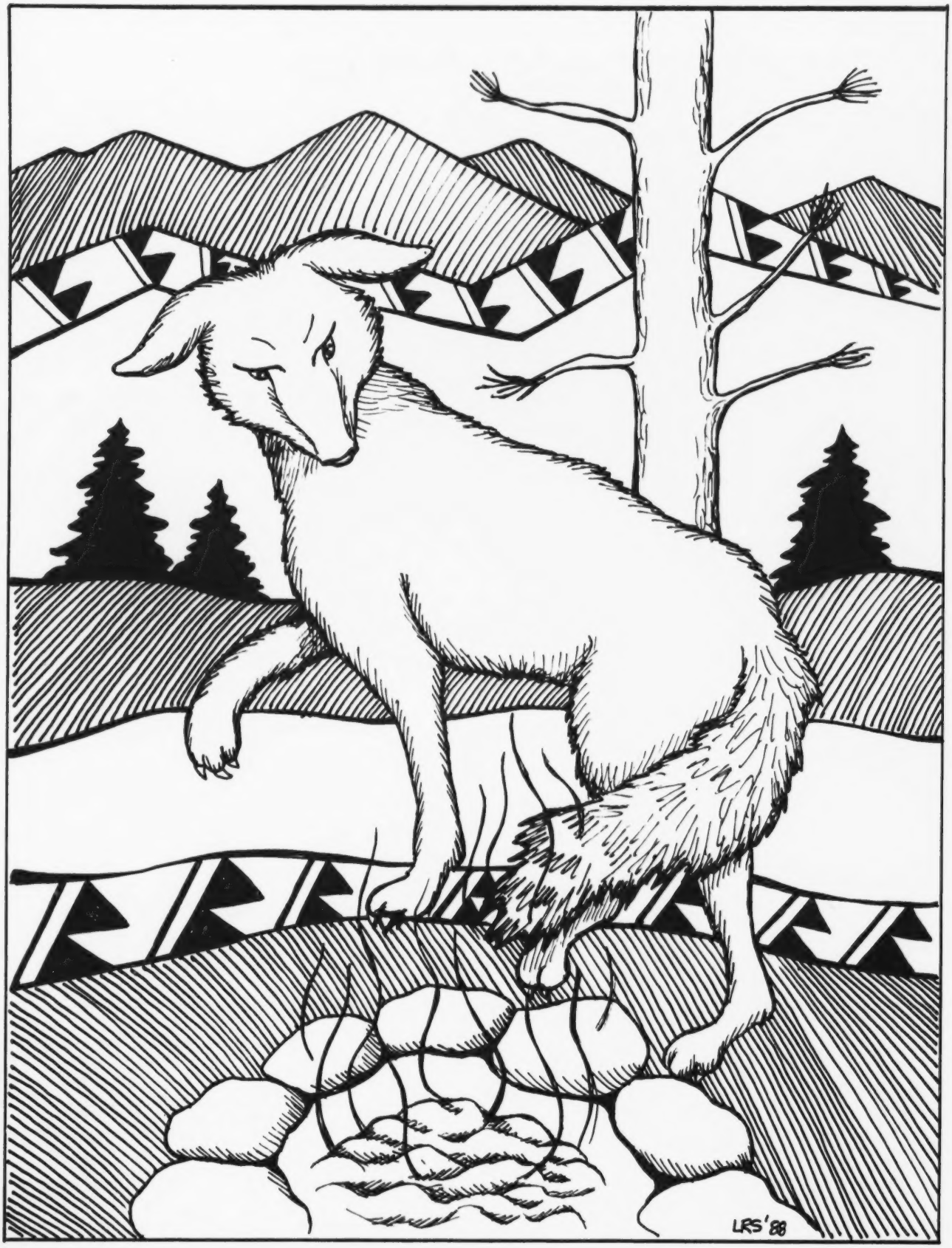
And so all the animals of the forest picked tails except for Coyote for he was fast asleep. As the sun rose high in the sky Coyote snored and the sharp stick poked his ear and he woke up with a start.
WOH-TUH KƱ TOHM OK-CEH KƱ CKΔ-WOK CIM-EH W∃R-H∃RI. MUC KWEH CE-GΛP KƱ KE-ƆGN HE-GOH N∃R-∃R-Ɔ∃RH CU KƱ WEC-O-NΛ CE-GΛP HΔ-WEH HI-ME-NI.

"Is there a tail for me? Is there a tail for me?"
"OKW HΛC W∃R-H∃RI MEH NEK?"

There was a beautiful tail left because the Creator had made all the tails beautiful in their own way. But Coyote was so angry with himself for sleeping late that he dragged the end of his beautiful tail through his fire and burned the ends.
WIIT OKW NƱ-MI M∃R-M∃RI W∃R-H∃RI MIH KƱ WO-NG-EKC-OHL HUH HƱ-KƱHM WOH-TƱH NΛ-RE-WOH KƱ WON CO-NEH. CE-GΛP COH TΔ-TEC MEH NI-MƱƆ MEH KWE-LΛC ƆKΔ-YEK CPΛK-ROH AP LΔT-KWE-LOS WU W∃R-H∃RI LΛ KƱ MEƆ KƱ RΔ-WO-NΛ LO-OP.

And that is why to this day Coyote has a scraggly tail.
WI-IT MEH KIHM CO NΔ-WIH WEI-XO KƱ. KƱ K∃R-M∃R-LƱ-
Therefore it looks terrible now. The ugly

WΔI W∃R-H∃RI.
tail.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